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ABSTRACT

The status of rural and small schools in today's society is such that it is confronted with a myriad of problems. Differing from school to school and from community to community, the most consistent rural and small schools problems are: (1) low level of instructional quality, (2) inadequate physical facilities, (3) financial instability, (4) less than desirable instructional resources and materials. Moreover, rural and small schools are not receiving their proportionate share of Federal educational funds, and State education offices are encouraging elimination of rural and small schools via financial allocation systems which reward large school districts and penalize small school districts. Despite these problems and prevalent criticism of the rural and small schools concept, some educators believe rural and small schools can provide a good climate for positive social behaviors among children, as well as revive and improve the total social climate in America. The 11 annotated book citations and the 20 annotated periodical citations presented herein are important works dealing with aspects of the following major issues in rural and small school education: (1) finances, (2) program quality, (3) staff development, (4) community control, (5) special needs learners, (6) physical facilities, and (7) appropriation of State and Federal monies. (JC)

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THE RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOL:

A COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION BOOKLET

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INTRODUCTION

The rural and small school have long served the many small communities in the United States. In recent years the rural and small school have come under question by many sources in the political and educational world. Some have said that the rural school no longer meet the needs of children. Others have charged that rural and small schools are to expensive to operate in a quality manner.

The debate over whether the rural and small school should be consolidated with larger educational units has been conducted largely on an emotional basis. It is rare that those involved in the debate look at the educational alternatives available to rural school educators. Indeed the main concern should be the provision of quality educational opportunities for children who live in rural and small communities.

As public schooling in the United States is a matter of local control it should be the local community people who initiate an on-going process of improving their educational offerings. Thus the authors have pulled together an information booklet on facts and alternatives that rural and small school educators may use in examining their programs. Such information can be used by rural school people to examine their program offerings and to communicate to other agencies the rationale behind their program.

ISSUES CONFRONTING THE LEADERS OF RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOLS

Historically, the rural school has met a critical cultural need in rural America, serving as a focal point for the education of America's youth and, with the church, provided a center for community activities of many descriptions. Today, however, many are the voices raised in strong criticism to the concept of the small, rural educational institution. These voices themselves, representing lay citizens, educators, politicians, and others seem to be eroding the public confidence in rural education. In addition, the rural school is beset with a myriad of problems including finances, quality education, instructional diversity, available materials and resources, and physical facilities.[1]

Frought with problems on all sides, it appears as though the small, rural school exists in the twilight of an era. One can, however, rationally ask whether students, rural citizens, and society at large would be better served by another answer to rural education. If, indeed, logical arguments remain concerning the integrity of the rural school, it appears necessary to probe these problems and the possible solutions to these problems.

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[1]School Problems Commission No. 12, Illinois School Problems. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Office of Education, 1973. p. 7.

The status of rural and small schools in today's society is such that it is confronted with a myriad of problems. The problems differ from school to school and from community to community. They range from inadequate financial resources to a lack of qualified teachers. In general it has been found that the following problems consistently are found in rural and small schools: low level of instructional quality, financial instability, inadequate physical facilities, and less than desirable instructional resources and materials.[2]

Indeed the rural and small school appear to be under attack from many educational and social forces. For example, Tamblyn[3] and Soth[4] substantiate that the rural and small school-community are not receiving their proportionate share of federal funds for educational and social improvement. In the same respect many state education offices are encouraging the elimination of rural and small schools through financial allocation systems which reward large school districts and penalize small school districts.[5]

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[2]Lewis R. Tamblyn, Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America. Washington, D.C.: Rural Education Association, 1973, pp. 2-12.

[3]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[4]Lauren Soth, "Rural Areas Shortened," Rural Education News, 24 (5), September-October, 1972. p. 2.

[5]School Problems Commission No. 12, Illinois School Problems. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Office of Education, 1973. See Appendix 6, p. 52.

In spite of the problems and the external criticisms of the rural and small school concept some educators believe there is a positive aspect to the rural, small school. For example, it has been pointed out that the smallness of the rural classroom can provide a climate for the development of positive social behaviors among children.[6] In addition, community school advocates believe the rural and small school can serve as a means of reviving and improving the total social climate in rural America.[7]

Indeed the major issues confronting the rural and small school are finances, program quality, staff development, community control, special needs learners, physical facilities, and attracting state and federal monies. Rural and small schools have for a long period of time met the needs of their students. Rural educators must continue to meet these needs by solving the problems in which they are involved in the 1970's.

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[6]Kevin Swick, "Rural Schools As Centers For Humanistic Learning," Rural Education News, 26 (1) February, 1974. p. 6.

[7]David Dean, Community Schools In Rural Areas. Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., 1974. p. 7.

ANNOTATED BOOK LIST: RURAL EDUCATION

Archer, Clifford P., Elementary Education in Rural Areas. New York: Ronald Press Company, 1958.

An excellent source book on the kinds of humanistic learning activities that can take place in the small school. Although written in 1958 this book contains many relevant ideas on how to improve instruction in rural and small school classrooms. The book is especially relevant in its use of the community as a learning place.

Butterworth, Julian E., and Howard Dawson. The Modern Rural School. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1952.

Many of the ideas presented in this book (written in 1952) have already been adopted by good rural school educators. A suggestion on reading the book would be to adopt those points applicable to your school situation. The book does have some good chapters on use of outdoor education, creating effective instruction, and use of taxes in improving rural education.

Charyk, John C., Pulse of The Community. (volume II of the little white schoolhouse) Canada: Praire Books, 1970.

This book provides a well documented history of the early rural school. It is enjoyable reading and important reading for the person who wants to compare rural education yesterday with rural education today.

Coombs, Philip H., and Manzoor Ahmed. Attacking Rural Poverty. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974.

The chapters in this book that are especially interesting are Chapter Two (An Overview of Rural Education), Chapter Five (Training for Nonfarm Occupations), Chapter Six (The Self-Help Approach To Rural Development), Chapter Nine (A Critique of Training Programs for Nonformal Education), Chapter Ten (Improving The Technologies of Nonformal Education), Chapter Eleven (The Economics of Nonformal Education), and Chapter Twelve (Planning, Organization, Management, and Staffing).

Cranston, Mildred Welch, What We Can Expect of Rural Schools? New York: The Women's Press, 1948.

This book provides a fascinating overview of the rural school as it has existed and meets the needs of rural communities. The book contains some very useful information on how the rural school as changed to meet varying needs of the agrarian society and the now technological society.

Gordon, Julia Weber, My Country School Diary. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1946.

An excellent book which contains the story of one very fine school teacher. The book contains many relevant instructional approaches that teachers in rural and urban school would do well to adopt. The book also shows how the rural school can meet the personal needs of both students and parents. A delightful book that every educator should read.

Hendersen, George., National Assessment and Rural Education. Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, 1973.

Henderson presents the national assessment findings as related to the rural school. Although many rural schools lag behind their suburban counterparts in the academic areas the social growth is much advanced in rural school children. Henderson believes this may be due to the more personal climate of the rural school classroom.

Henry, Nelson B., Education in Rural Communities. Fifty-First Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1952.

Three chapters of this book are still relevant reading for rural educators today. Chapter three presents a good overview of the potential of the rural classroom, Chapter Eight contains a political view on how rural schools need to unite in order to acquire their fair share of federal and state educational funds, and Chapter Nine provides a sound evaluation model rural school educators can use in assessing their instructional programs.

Tamblyn, Lewis, R., Inequality: A Portrait of Rural America. Washington, D.C.: Rural Education Association, 1973.

Tamblyn provides an up to date overview of the status of both rural schools and rural communities in the United States. He presents information on the problems confronting rural schools and on answers to these problems posed by the National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty. A needed book by all rural educators in order to have the facts at hand when debating the many heated issues in rural education today.

Tamblyn, Lewis R., Rural Education in the United States. Washington D.C.: Rural Education Association, 1971.

Tamblyn, who is one of the leading authorities in the field of rural education, examines the problems of the rural school. He states that ruralschools need to be maintained by improving their performance in all instructional areas. Tamblyn notes that by receiving their fair share of the funds they (rural schools) could offer more specialized services to their students. This is another fact book all rural educators should acquire for their professional library.

Tamblyn, Lewis and Edward Moe., Rural Schools As A Mechanism For Rural Development. Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, 1974.

Tamblyn and Moe outline and describe the methods which rural schools could use to develop strong rural communities. They, in essence, provide a sound rationale and strategy for utilizing the rural community school as the vehicle for reviving many latent and decaying rural communities. This is an excellent book for those interested in the community school concept in rural America.

ANNOTATED PERIODICALS: RURAL SCHOOLS

1. Edwards, Clark and Robert Coltrane, "Economic and Social Indicators From An Economic Viewpoint," (Eric Documents, ED 085 123), February, 1973.

   A factual presentation on the economic potential of rural areas. The document points to the potential economic strong points existent in most rural communities. Educators may find the document helpful in examining future tax sources for financing rural education.

2. Horner, James T. "Renaissance Required In Rural Education," Agriculture Education Magazine. Vol. 44, No. 4.

   The author gives a very brief but potent presentation on the need for more relevant instruction in rural schools. He focuses on the areas of technology and materials for updating instruction in rural schools to prepare rural students for more diverse economic roles in the future.

3. Goldmark, Peter. "Communications For A New Rural Society," Audio Visual Guide. Vol. 51, p. 21-26. November, 1972.

   The author presents a vivid comparison of rural life in times past with rural life today. He then presents a useful communications system for rural communities of tomorrow. His ideas are worth the time of every rural educators as they contain some possible solutions to the separateness which has plagued many rural schools.

4. Cowles, Milly. "Developmental Planning For Early Childhood Education in a Rural County," National Elementary Principal. Vol. L1, No. 1, September, 1971.

   A very useful article for those interested in acquiring how high quality early childhood educational programs can be established in rural areas. Dr. Cowles presents some fine ideas on how rural schools can team together in such planning and development.

5. Thomas, Alan. Financing Rural Education (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, E.D. 088 653, 1974).

   According to Thomas the main financial problem confronting rural schools is the salary of teachers and staff. He notes that insufficient revenue sources has forced many rural schools out of competition with other schools in terms of teacher salaries. A major impetus toward improved rural schools will have to be improved financial sources.

6. Edington, Everett D. "Disadvantaged Rural Youth," Review of Educational Research. 40 (1) February, 1970.

The main theme of this article is on rural poverty. The author cites research support that substantiates that families living in the Norther New Mexico, Mississippi Delta, Ozarks, and Appalachian regions of the United States have average incomes below $2,000. Edington points out that such income levels are hardly conducive to forming a solid financial base for quality rural schools. He also points out that such rural poor areas do not receive their fair share of federal and state monies for education.

7. Hesacker, Frank. "Hitching Up The Small School Districts," American Education. 6 (3) April, 1970.

The author states that the lack of money to purchase needed services has become a way of life in most rural school districts. He points out that many of these rural schools lack money for special services, thus proposing the need for rural school cooperatives in meeting special needs of students and adult members of the community.

8. Stark, Nancy. "How Schools Can Listen To The Community," American Education. 7 (6), July, 1971.

An excellent article which tells how one school district in Michigan failed to pass tax bonds for school improvement because they did not inform the community of the vast influx of people into the schools. The article, through concrete example shows how important an community involvement program is to the continued improvement of school programs.

9. Sturges, A.W. The Small School: A Rediscovered Resource in American Education. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, E.D. 088 622, March, 1974.

The author points out that rural school have the human resources to solve their economic and social problems. He calls on rural educators to revive the rural community school as a personal vehicle for making the rural school what it can be, a relevant and enjoyable place to learn.

10. Wagley, Leon. Community Development Guide For Restructuring Community Development in Agricultural Education. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 085 153, 1974.

Wagley provides a comprehensive guide for agricultural educators to use in conducting a needs analysis in their communities thus giving them a base for conducting a more relevant agricultural education program in the schools.

11. Clark, Phil. Guidelines For Relating Community Education and the Regular School Instructional Program. (Bethesda, Md.: ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 085 148, 1972.

Clark examines the possibility of relating community needs to the regular educational program. He proposed a way of acquiring feedback from community members on the needs they view as vital for the school to include in the instructional program.

12. Swick, Kevin and Kim Driggers. "Planning For In-Service Education in Rural Schools: A Developmental Model," Rural Education News, 27 (1), January-February, 1975.

Swick and Driggers suggest a step by step approach for in-service education for rural schools. The basic steps they examine are needs assessment, establishing goals and objectives; identification of available services, organizing and developing such services for in-service use, an implementation plan, and continual follow-up and evaluation. A good model for rural schools to use in keeping their staff up to date.

13. Bay, Ovid and Roe Black. "Big School Services For Country Kids," Farm Journal. 93 (9), September, 1969.

The author describes a unique program which provided children with audio-taped lessons while they traveled to and from school on buses. This is one example of how modern communication systems can revolutionize rural schools for the better.

14. Newsweek, "Learn All About It," 83 (1), January 7, 1974.

A national report on how one rural school used the daily newspaper to teach current events. A unique instructional approach applied in a rural school. This approach still used the textbook but used the newspaper in all subject areas for keeping students up to date on current events in the world.

15. Bitters, Charles. "Small Schools Project in Texas," Rural Education News, 25 (3) May-June, 1975.

The author describes the Texas Small Schools Project. He points out how this project aided school in improving their instructional programs through the use of programmed instruction, instructional television, in-service education programs, correspondence courses, individualized instruction, and other educational alternatives.

16. Edington, Everett. "Serving Rural Youth: A Regional Approach," Rural Education News, 24 (3), September-October, 1972.

Edington cited that small school districts have a problem in developing a broad spectrum for the needs and wants of the students in rural areas. For this reason he suggests a regional approach as an option to meeting these needs. His belief is that this will provide a variety of services over a larger given area throughout the districts.

17. School Problems Commission No. 12. Illinois School Problems. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Office of Education, 1973, p. 7.

An excellent source book on the problems of education in one state. Special attention is given to the problems of rural schools in Illinois. The main problem, according to this report is financial. Supplementary and related problems, according to the report, are poor instruction, out of date facilities, and lack of special services such as special education. The document does not provide any suggestions (other than school district consolidation) on how to solve such problems.

18. Swick, Kevin. "Rural Schools As Centers For Humanistic Learning," Rural Education News. 26 (1) February, 1974, p. 6.

An excellent article which describes the personal potential rural schools capitalize on in the educational process. Swick notes that rural schools often have small enough environments to attend to the personal needs of each student. Larger schools may have fancier equipment but often lack the personal quality so necessary for learning.

19. Soth, Lauren. "Rural Areas Shortened," Rural Education News. 24 (5) September-October, 1972, p. 2.

The author provides substantial evidence that rural school districts do not receive their share of the educational finance pie. Too often, says Soth, rural schools are penalized by state education agencies because of their smallness. He suggests that the rural school educators organize in order to assure they receive their fair share of money.

20. Dean, David. Community Schools In Rural Areas. Austin, Texas: National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., 1974, p. 7.

The author presents some examples of community schools which have succeeded in rural America. He also outlines procedures that rural school educators can use in implementing and developing a community school in their district.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON RURAL AND SMALL SCHOOLS

1. ERIC Clearinghouse on
   Rural and Small Schools
   New Mexico State University
   Las Cruces, New Mexico

2. Rural Education News
   National Education Association
   Washington, D.C.

3. Texas Small Schools Project
   San Antonio, Texas

4. American Association of Teacher Educators In Agriculture
   North Dakota State University
   Fargo. North Dakota

5. American Country Living
   Economic Research Service
   U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Washington, D.C.

6. Association of Regional Educational Agencies
   Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative
   Harrogate, Tenn.

7. Catskill Area School Study Council
   State University College
   Oneonta, New York

8. National Catholic Rural Life
   3801 Grand Avenue
   Des Moines, Iowa

9. North Central Association of Schools
   Department of Education
   State Capitol Building
   Charleston, West Virginia

10. National Federation For The Improvement of Rural Education
    710 S.W. Second Ave.
    Portland, Oregon

11. Oregon Small School Program
942 Lancaster Drive, N.E.
Salem, Oregon

12. Rural Sociology Society
Department of Agriculture Economics and Rural Sociology
Auburn University
Auburn, Alabama

13. Texas Small School Association
Paradise Independent School District
Paradise, Texas

14. Project Innovation
Publishers of Education
Chula Vista, California

15. American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
1291 Sixteenth St., N.W.
Washington, D.C.

16. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1701 K St. N.W.
Washington, D.C.

17. Association for Childhood Education International
Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

18. National Middle School Association
Post Office Box 968
Fairborn, Ohio

19. State Department of Education
Chief State School Officer
For Specific State

20. Congressional Record
U.S. Government Documents
Printing Office
Washington, D.C.